

## WIDENING ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2018/19 – 2020/21

**Institutions are required to submit information under each of the headings below. Please see the guidance notes for help in completing this return.**

**1.1** Please provide a high level outline of your institution's Widening Participation policy in Higher Education and how this fits in with the institution's strategic direction.

### **Widening Participation Policy in HE**

The College is fully committed to widening access and participation at all levels and across all curriculum areas.

In doing so, the College aims to be an outstanding provider of training and education that:

“will provide students with a life-changing, supportive and innovative experience, which will equip them with the skills to compete successfully in the global employment market and meet the needs of local industry and employers”.

The College has also explicitly identified ‘inclusiveness’ as one of the core values that is contained within the current strategic plan. The College is therefore committed to providing access to all individuals and under-represented groups in its catchment area.

In summary, the College's WAP activities may be broken down as follows:

#### **Pre-entry**

The College has a strong access to University provision that provides and promotes an attractive and successful route to HE for those adult returners who, for a variety of reasons, do not currently meet the entry requirements for HE programmes. This provision will be continued and will be fully supported by the College.

The College also has a strong community-facing focus and seeks to provide education and training opportunities for those who might not normally engage with the College. It will continue to engage enthusiastically with local groups and communities including those local schools that do not have a history of engaging with HE. The College is actively engaging closely with the four councils within our catchment area on a number of strategic activities which include targeting and improving provision for identified disadvantaged groups and areas within the council catchments. This engagement is at all levels throughout the organisation.

The College is also committed to providing a modern, relevant curriculum including Higher Level Apprenticeships and these are likely to prove attractive to students from a Widening Access background.

In seeking to progress its existing students to HE, the College provides careers advice to all of its Level 2 and 3 students. This ensures that potential progression routes are identified and clearly signposted. The College's tutorial system also supports students with their choices and applications to courses at the next level. The College's Digital Learning Environment provides additional flexibility for those students who wish to progress independent learning in preparation for higher education. In addition, as part of our

marketing and communications strategy, we have a focus on the use of social media to target adult learners.

### **Internal Student Support**

The College's Education Support Team works to ensure that all students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties receive the necessary support and help them integrate fully into College life and succeed with their chosen course. These students, who have additional needs due to their disability, specific learning difficulty, or medical condition are assisted sensitively and discretely to enable them to complete their courses.

The Team offers advice and assistance with the application for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), and will often provide support for the applicant even before the DSA process is completed.

The Education Support Team currently supports students with a wide range of additional study needs providing support and advice including the following:

- Educational Support Workers e.g. Note-takers, readers
- Support for sensory needs e.g. specialist software, sign language interpreters, alternative document formats
- Alternative exam arrangements
- Group learning support sessions
- Specialist equipment
- Risk Assessments
- Advice and support regarding access to College facilities and services
- DSA application process
- College counselling support

The College is aware that a proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities remains widely unreported in the education sector. Close teacher/student interaction often identifies previously unreported or unidentified problems which are then signposted to student services for further assessment of need and support as required.

All students within the College are automatically members of the Students' Union. An elected Higher Education Officer role exists on each campus to represent the views of HE students across all campuses.

The College Careers team works closely with local employers, schools and our students to encourage progression into Higher Education programmes (both full and part-time). The careers and economic engagement teams have been involved in working with community groups, employers and employees in upskilling and assistance with education and career development.

The College reviews its fee structure annually to ensure that the cost of HE does not act as a barrier to entry and will provide bursaries to those students who present themselves from low income backgrounds, the level of which will be reviewed to ensure widest participation.

### **External**

Within the College catchment area, around one third of school leavers achieve less than 5 GCSEs A\*-C grades including English and Maths. In some of its council areas, this figure is as high as 38.7%, well above the Northern Ireland average of 34%. This level of

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educational under-achievement impacts generally, though not exclusively, on communities of greatest social deprivation. The College seeks to support these leavers through its FE provision, Essential Skills and Work Based Learning (which it is seeking to further enhance).

The College seeks to encourage students into the STEM areas through a wide range of targeted events during the year including STEM Fest. Females have traditionally been under-represented in the STEM HE provision within the College and from 2015/16 staff used the STEM Fest event to specifically target females and encourage them to consider a course/career in a STEM area. The College will seek to expand the number of schools taking part in the event and will begin to target specific schools towards meeting WAP targets.

Community engagement is also high on the College's agenda and this will be actively pursued during the next academic year.

### **1.2** What is your view of the success record of your institution in relation to recruitment, retention and progression for Widening Participation students?

The College examines data on access to HE under the following criteria: - age, community background, socio-economic class, gender, ethnic origin, marital status, mode of attendance, disability and course type.

The College was previously awarded the Buttle UK Quality Mark. This was conferred on universities and colleges that offer a threshold level of support to care leavers and have also demonstrated a commitment to improving their provision further. Having achieved its goal of raising awareness among universities and colleges this award has now been discontinued, although the College continues to recognise and provide support for students who have been in care to the level required at the time of the award. The College works closely with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, to identify care leavers and also provide them with appropriate support.

The College is developing its planning and monitoring of WAP and full understanding of the WAP activities within the College through a wide variety of functions including careers. This will continue to be developed.

The data in respect of student retention and achievement is monitored by Department and course level. Curriculum challenge sessions also focus on identifying trends and best practice in widening participation.

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**Enrolments**

Table 1 shows enrolments of Higher Education students at the College by Quintile:

MDM Quintile	2016/17			3 Year Avg (2013/14 to 2015/16)		
	FT	PT	TOTAL	FT	PT	Overall
1	40	98	138	28	99	128
2	51	155	206	50	180	231
3	86	272	358	79	269	348
4	76	261	337	83	296	380
5	96	153	249	65	208	273
Unknown		12	12	1	22	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>1044</b>	<b>1358</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>1054</b>	<b>1360</b>
<b>TABLE 1 HE ENROLMENTS - Students by Quintile (2014/15 against a 3-year average (2012/13 – 2014/15</b>						

Table 1 illustrates that enrolments for 2016/17 show a positive increase against the 3 year average for FT students in quintile 1 with similar numbers in Quintile 2. Quintile 2 also demonstrates a positive overall increase above the 3 year average when PT students are taken into account. This trend is likely to continue as the College's WAPP develops.

**Performance**

Table 2 (below) illustrates retention, achievement and success rates for quintiles 1 and 2 and allows for comparison with overall rates within HE in the College.

For the 2015/16 academic year Quintile 1 has the same retention and success rates as the College as a whole with slightly better achievement rates. Quintile 2 students form a similar pattern with slightly higher than average success rates. Quintile 1 figures show a positive increase in both retention and success rates particularly with FT students. Quintile 2 overall shows a slight decrease but shows an increase within the FT students in this cohort. The 2015/16 figures against average also see students from Quintiles 1 and 2 outperforming HE students overall. The objective is to continue this improvement trend as the College's WAP plans mature over the forthcoming years.

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MDM Quintile		15/16			Average			15/16 Difference against average			15/16 % Difference against average		
		% Retention	% Achievement	% Success	% Retention	% Achievement	% Success	% Retention	% Achievement	% Success	% Retention	% Achievement	% Success
1	FT - Yr 1	96			91			5			5.5		
	PT - Yr 1	91			86			5			5.8		
	FT - Yr 2	100	100	100	100	94	94	0	6	6	0.0	6.4	6.4
	PT - Yr 2	88	92	81	92	89	83	-4	3	-2	-4.3	3.4	-2.4
<b>1 Total</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>
2	FT - Yr 1	93			96			-3			-3.1		
	PT - Yr 1	79			82			-3			-3.7		
	FT - Yr 2	100	100	100	99	97	96	1	3	4	1.0	3.1	4.2
	PT - Yr 2	94	88	82	94	90	85	0	-2	-3	0.0	-2.2	-3.5
<b>2 Total</b>		<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-1.1</b>	<b>-1.1</b>	<b>-2.3</b>
<b>Overall</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>-1.1</b>	<b>-3.3</b>	<b>-4.5</b>
<b>Table 2</b>	<b>HE RETENTION, ACHIEVEMENT, SUCCESS Students by Quintiles 1 and 2 (2015/16 against a 3-year average (2013/14 – 2015/16))</b>												

1.3 Please outline the Widening Participation aims, objectives and targets for the next 3 years for your institution.

*You will need to provide details on key target groups within Access to Success, anticipated expenditure and the measures of success – your response should include a description of your approach to targeting, as well as the areas targeted for improvement over the next 3 years. You may wish to add to the projection tables below to report on your own institution's specified target groups if not already included in Access to Success.*

**Key Priorities for 2018/19**

The key priority for 18/19 will be the appointment of a designated WAP Officer within the College. The roles of the post will be to:

- Act as coordinator for the College's WAP activity.
- In consultation with MIS develop better WAP internal reports in order to provide better analysis and understanding of WAP statistics and trends.
- In consultation with Student Finance Coordinator monitor finances related to the WAP cost centre and report to the designated budget holder.

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- Provide regular updates to the WAP Working Group and Teaching & Learning Committee (and other college forums as required).
- Collate an accurate overview of the full extent of WAP activity in the College to include curriculum, economic engagement, schools partnerships and community partnerships.
- Engage with stakeholders including local schools and community groups.
- Advise the College management and WAP Working Group regards WAP initiatives, opportunities and issues.

Using the information gathered by the WAP Officer, to refine SMART targets relating to the enhanced understanding of the statistical analysis carried out during the 18/19 academic year. It is also planned to carry out data analysis of progression pathways. Improving the identified groups' recruitment, retention and success within the College and also targeting the communities from which these groups are drawn.

From current trends it is expected that additional focus on MDM Quintile 1 and 2 and Quintile 1 Young Males particularly young Catholic males, within our catchment area who are under-represented.

Through the deployment of the Digital Learning Environment, provide an online tailored induction for Widening access students.

### **Key Priorities for 2019/20 and 20/21**

Provide a three year analysis and plan going forward to increase participation from under-represented groups. Review progress of the SMART targets set within 17/18 and see upward trends in the groups targeted by the College. Identify specific College targets as per 1.3(b)

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**1.3 (a) TARGETS**

You will note that the tables numbered (i) to (vi) below have been pre populated with your institution's average enrolment for the last 3 years. You are now required to insert numerical targets for each of the groups identified across the 3 years 2018/19 – 2020/21. These groups are regarded as being under represented in Access to Success.

- (i) Group: **MDM Quintile 1**  
Outcome: **To increase participation of those from NI MDM Q1**

AVERAGE (based on 4 years 2012- 2016)	Targets/Outcome			
4 Year Average	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
131			145	150

- (ii) Group: **Students with a Disability**  
Outcome: **To increase the number of students who declare a disability**

AVERAGE (based on 4 years 2012- 2016)	Targets/Outcome			
4 Year Average	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
76			81	83

- (iii) Group: **Students with a Disability**  
Outcome: **To increase the number of students in receipt of DSA**

AVERAGE (based on 4 years 2012- 2016)	Targets/Outcome			
4 Year Average	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
			32	32

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(iv) Group: **Young Males from Quintile 1**

Outcome: **To increase participation of young males from NI MDM Quintile 1**

AVERAGE (based on 4 years 2012- 2016)	Targets/Outcome			
4 Year Average	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
14			14	15

(v) Group: **Adult Learners**

Outcome: **To increase the number of adult learners participating in HE**

AVERAGE (based on 4 years 2012- 2016)	Targets/Outcome			
4 Year Average	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
795			840	850

As HESA data is largely incomplete for the following area, the figure that you provided in the 2014/15 WAPP has been inserted as a base line.

(vi) Group: **Number of Care Experienced enrolments**

Outcome: **To increase the number of enrolments for those from a care background**

BASE YEAR	Targets/Outcome			
2014/15	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
6 (15/16)			7	8



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**1.3(b)** The following tables have been provided for you to now insert any other ‘**specific**’ institutional targets. These may be different to those groups identified in 1.3(a) or may relate to targets other than enrolments. In all cases you will need to identify the group and highlight what the target outcome will be e.g. outreach, retention etc

(i)

Group: N/A
Outcome: N/A

Baseline (statistical or % participation last year monitored)	Targets/Outcome			
	2014/15	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	Number			
	Percentage			

(ii)

Group: N/A
Outcome: N/A

Baseline (statistical or % participation last year monitored)	Targets/Outcome			
	2014/15	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	Number			
	Percentage			

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(iii) 

Group: N/A
Outcome: N/A

Baseline (statistical or % participation last year monitored)	Targets/Outcome			
	2014/15	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	<b>Number</b>			
	<b>Percentage</b>			

Please now outline the estimated 'direct' expenditure required to meet the identified objectives in the table below. You may wish to refer to Part 2 of the guidance notes in "How to Complete your Widening Access and Participation Plan" for a definition of direct spend. Whilst we appreciate that figures for later years are only indicative we do require estimations inserted in each of the categories.

Activity	Estimated Spend 2018/19 (£)	Estimated Spend 2019/20 (£)	Estimated Spend 2020/21 (£)
Bursaries	£37,500.00	£38,000.00	£39,000.00
Scholarships			
Other financial Support			
Outreach	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	£6,000.00
Retention	£4,000.00	£4,000.00	£4,000.00
Research Activity			
Staffing/ Administration	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£52,500.00</b>	<b>£53,000.00</b>	<b>£54,000.00</b>

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- 1.4 List below the key programmes/projects financed from additional student fees that will contribute towards your institution's performance.  
(Please refer to the appropriate section of the guidance notes before completing.)

Project 1 - Development and implementation of a Recruitment Plan

Based on the research carried out in 17-18 by the WAP Officer a recruitment plan will be developed which will improve recruitment in underrepresented groups and will incorporate projects 2, 3 and 4

Project 2 Outreach – HE Into Schools

To bring an HE experience into local schools particularly targeting secondary schools with catchment areas from MDM quintiles 1. This will involve lecturers from HE programmes delivering HE taster sessions to year 12 and 13 students allowing them to experience the type of delivery they may expect in an HE programme at the College or at a different HE provider. Where appropriate they will also be able to experience practical use of equipment that would usually only be available to HE students.

Project 3 Outreach – Community Outreach through Sport

Look at opportunities to work with partners and local stakeholders such as Councils, Youth organisations, sports clubs and the University of Ulster in order to engage with young people in a familiar environment. The aim of this project will focus particularly on attracting young disadvantaged males from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds.

Project 4 Retention - WAP Induction and Ongoing Support

This will be continued from the previous 17/18 WAPP. It will provide a range of timely interventions to ensure that the students are suitably supported at all stages in their academic journey. This will be facilitated by Student Services in conjunction with the WAP Officer. The main aims of this will be to monitor progress of students from all underrepresented groups, identify early issues and provide timely intervention in order to improve retention and success. Intervention may include, educational support, counselling, financial advice/assistance and or referral to educational psychologist.

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**1.5** Please provide a short summary of how your activities link to the key actions within Access to Success.

The College WAPP activity contributes to :

- Theme 2 'Raising Aspiration and Attainment' Key Action 5;
- Theme 3 'Enhancing recruitment and selection' Key Actions 6 and 7;
- Theme 4 'Improving the quality and relevance of support for retention and progression' Key Actions 8 and 9.

**1.6** How do you plan to communicate information on the availability of financial and other assistance to students?

Financial and other assistance will be communicated to students prior to applying to the College via the website and the admissions portal, College prospectus (both online and printed), other promotional materials and events including school talks, parent evenings and careers events. Initial automated emails to applicants also provide an online link to College financial information.

All applicants for both full time and part time courses are either formally interviewed or are invited to attend information sessions and, where appropriate, will be directed to a financial support expert. Where appropriate, students will be directed to online information and can also be provided with a Finance Leaflet, detailing financial support opportunities. Once enrolled with the College, students will have access to information on financial assistance through the College's intranet, the College Tutorial system etc. Confidential meetings can also be arranged with the College's Student Finance Team.

Project 4 identified above (Section 1.4) will ensure that this information is available in advance of their decision to study at NRC.

**1.7** How do you plan to monitor progress against the targets and the achievement of outcomes?

The main source of data collection in the College is through its MIS systems which can be interrogated by the College's MI team via common or bespoke reports. The College has introduced the use of Power BI dash board reports to assist in monitoring student applications and enrolments. Students are required to provide their details on the College's online enrolment system to ensure that the College has collected the necessary details to allow suitable interventions to take place. An increased ability to track student metrics will allow earlier detection of trends in attendance or assessment by individual course tutors and allow for more timely intervention. More global trends will be monitored by the WAP Officer who can help coordinate intervention centrally in conjunction with

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student services. The College has introduced a requirement for daily monitoring and weekly reporting of student attendance through the e-register system.

Targets and achievements will be monitored by the College's WAP Coordinator and reported back to the College's WAP Working Group and to the College's Curriculum Management Team for agreeing action where required.

### **1.8** Please provide an additional evaluation on how you think your institution is performing. *(Full details on how to complete this section are in the guidance notes)*

In order to ensure consistency across institutions we would ask that you use the Kirkpatrick Model for this exercise. The concept is that individual institutions will learn from this self-evaluation and obtain evidence to influence future widening participation activity and plans. You may evaluate the institution's widening participation activity as a whole, or evaluate individual projects.

The following sub headings should help focus your response. The Department expects that most institutions will be able to evaluate widening participation activity to at least Level 3 (as below).

#### **Level 1 Evaluation – Reactions**

*What participants thought and felt about the programme*

Students have confirmed that the bursary has been essential in helping with their subsistence and reducing their reliance on part time work. Improvements are being effected internally to ensure better understanding of the reaction of students to WAP-related initiatives and to monitor their effectiveness.

#### **Level 2 Evaluation - Learning**

*The resulting increase in knowledge or capability*

The College recognises the need to improve monitoring of the progress of the WAP plans and developments and will be introducing a WAP coordinator post. In addition, feedback will be collected via the student surveys along with staff student consultative committees to evaluate relevant student effectiveness of WAP projects and usefulness of the bursary.

#### **Level 3 Evaluation – Transfer**

*Behaviour - extent of behaviour and capability improvement and implementation/application*

#### **Level 4 Evaluation- Results**

*Results- the effects resulting from performance*